Somaśarman, Somavāṃśa and Somasiddhānta

A Pāśupata tradition in seventh-century Dakṣiṇa Kosala

Studies in the Skandapurāṇa III

HARĀYA NAMAḤ

The first fruit of Minoru Hara’s life-task-project to clarify the early history of the Śaiva religion appeared in the Indo-Iranian Journal of 1958 under the title Nakulīśa–Pāśupata–Darśanam. This was followed by the submission of his dissertation, Materials for the study of Pāśupata Śaivism, to the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies of Harvard University in 1966 (Hara 1967). Ever since, Hara has contributed to the research into the history of the Pāśupata religion by a continuous series of meticulous studies.\(^1\) Thanks to these studies our knowledge of this enigmatic but fascinating branch of early Hinduism has significantly increased. Paucity of sources, however, has inevitably hampered our understanding of the process of origin and spread of this religious movement. Hara, like other scholars before him, duly recognized that the puranic text corpus contains numerous references to the Pāśupata religion. Yet, due to inconsistencies of all sorts and uncertainty as to their exact dates, he considered, rightly, the use of these texts for historic purposes a hazardous affair and consequently assigned them to the periphery of historical research. That is to say, for the time being, since,

Some day in the future, when all Purānic texts are critically edited and the inter-relationships among them established, they may help us in tracing the history of Pāśupata Śaivism. (Hara 1967, 12f.)

This day is, after thirty-four years, still far off. Critical editions of some Purāṇa texts have indeed been prepared since, by the All-India Kashiraj Trust in Ramnagar, the Oriental Institute in Vadodara (Viṣṇupuraṇa), and the Institute of

\(^{*}\) The first version of this article was published in Wezler, Albrecht & Ryutaro Tsuchida (eds.), Harānandalaharī. Volume in Honour of Professor Minoru Hara on his Seventieth Birthday. Inge Wezler Verlag, Reinbek 2000. pp. 1–19.

\(^{1}\) A collection of his contributions appeared in 2002 (Hara 2002).
Learning and Research in Ahmedabad (Bhāgavatapurāṇa), but they have not really brought the progress in Purāṇa studies that one should wish. Partly this is due to the unwieldiness of the puranic text corpus, partly to the fact that no old manuscript material has been used for these editions. How valuable ancient manuscripts are for gaining insight in the puranic text tradition itself and for the assessment of these texts as historical sources may be shown by the original Skandapurāṇa (SP), the edition of which is a long-term project of the Institute of Indian Studies in Groningen. Because the oldest manuscript of this text is dated AD 810, we can be certain that the information it contains dates from the eighth century or earlier. But even in this particular case the use of the Purāṇa text as a source of historical information remains a venturesome undertaking. Its historical value is greatly enhanced, however, when it proves possible to relate its data to other historical sources such as inscriptions. It is a matter of good fortune that this turns out to be the case in chapter 167 of the original Skandapurāṇa, a chapter—transmitted in two old Nepalese manuscripts, among which the one dated in AD 810—which deals with the traditional history and holy places of the Pāśupata and which is, as we will show, partly in agreement with epigraphical evidence of the seventh century. In this tribute to Hara I intend to make a modest contribution to the objective envisaged by the great Japanese scholar, viz. ‘tracing the history of Pāśupata Śaivism’.

ŚAIVA COSMOLOGY

The cosmology developed in mainstream early tantric Saivism distinguishes between the Pure (śuddhādhvān) and the Impure Universe (aśuddhādhvān). Both universes are hierarchically structured; the different levels of reality or domains are called tattva. A standard hierarchy counts thirty-one domains in the Impure Universe and five domains in the Pure one.² The domain that forms the trait-d’union between both universes is the Māyātattva. According to the Svacchandatatantra, this reality can be divided into two layers (puṭa), which are separated by a knot or barrier (granthi).³ Each layer comprises six ‘worlds’ (bhuvana) that are reigned over by altogether twelve Rudras. The barrier or granthi seems actually to be the border between both universes and may be considered a layer or madhyapuṭa by itself (SvT 10.1122–1131).

² See e.g. Davis 1991, 45. The canonical list of 36 tattvas is, as has been demonstrated by Goodall 1998, li–lv, in fact a consensus only reached ‘in the post-scriptural Śaiva Siddhānta of the commentators’ (ibid. lxi).

³ The Svacchanda is a Bhairava (Mantrapīṭha) Tantra and does not belong to the tradition of the Śaiva Siddhānta, though it seems to be quite close to this tradition (Sanderson 1988, 669 f.). The granthi is not a universally shared feature of the Śaiva cosmos (no mention of it is made in the Mrgendratantra, for instance).
The first Rudra on our side of the barrier is Gopati and the Rudra reigning the lowest ‘world’ of the sub-barrier layer of the Māyātattva is Gahana.\(^4\) Directly underneath him spreads the ‘net of bonds’ (pāsajāla),\(^5\) the created world that emerges from the Māyā Reality, assuming material form through the tattvas including those known from the Śaṃkhya system. The first Rudra on yonder side of the barrier is Kṣemēsa, followed by Brahmasvāmin; the principal Rudra of the Māyā Reality is Ananta.\(^6\) The Śvacchanda and its commentator seem to be confused as to whether the supra-barrier layer of the Māyā Reality still pertains to the Impure or to the Pure Universe (SvT 10.1129–31); the Niśvāsamukha, however, considers it still all part of the aśuddhādvān (4.121–25).\(^7\) In the middle, according to the Śvacchanda, that is on the barrier itself, at the very top of the Impure Universe, reigns the bountiful lord Ananta, the Master of the World (bhagavān ananteśo jagatpatih), who creates at will, is omniscient, maker of all, and dedicated to meting out confinement and grace (SvT 10.1127–28). Commenting on this passage Kṣemarāja observes that the Mātaṅgaśāstra situates Vigraheśāna in this madhyaputā, who is surrounded by eight Rudras: Śarva, Bhava, Ugra, Bhīma, Bhasman, Antaka, Dundubhi, and Śrīvatsa.\(^8\) The Niśvāsamukha places Vigraheśa immediately above Gahana.\(^9\)

In the Pure Universe, above the reality (tattva) of Śuddhavidyā (Vāgīśvari) are, according to the Śvacchanda, the worlds of the eight Rudras who are

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4 SvT 10.1124. Cf. Mātaṅga 1.8.86–89.
5 Niśvāsamukha 4.119–123 (Kafle 2015, 190 f.). This text is part of the Niśvāsatattvasamhitā (NiTS) corpus. A critical edition of the Mukha has been prepared by Nirajan Kafle and has been defended as part of his thesis in Leiden on 15 October 2015. I refer to this thesis, which eventually will appear in the Early Tantra Series published in Pondichéry. See also below, n. 7 on p. 285.
7 In Niśvāsamukha Paṭala 4 the text deals with the Atimārga. My treatment of this intricate subject in the original publication of 2000 was based on a letter by Alexis Sanderson (Oxford) to the author (21–7–’97), in which he generously placed at my disposal a preliminary edition of a portion of this text with an elaborate apparatus of testimonia. Since then much progress has been made in the edition and study of the Niśvāsatattvasamhitā corpus, and a critical edition of the three oldest Sūtras of this corpus—the Mūla, Uttara, and Naya—made by Dominic Goodall and others (including Alexis Sanderson), was published in Pondichéry in 2015. For further details I refer to the Prolegomena of this edition. For an assessment see Bakker 2018. See also Kafle 2015 for a critical edition of the Niśvāsamukha.
8 Kṣemarāja ad SvT 10.1127ab. Kṣemarāja adds that the Śrīpūryaśāstra (i.e. Mālinīvijayottaratantra 5.28–29) speaks of only eight deities (īsvarāśa) in the Māyātattva that form a manḍala of the size of a thumb, the first one of them being Mahādeva. Mātaṅga 1.8.83–85:

- etebhīgha 'dhah saṃsthito granthhir durbhedyaḥ cātivisrtyāḥ |
- yatṛasau vigraheśānāḥ sthitah paramadurjayah || 83 ||
- vṛto rudair mahābhāgaḥ svaśaktibalaśālībhīḥ |
- bhuvanām bhuvanesaṃsa vinodaśatastamkulām || 84 ||
- yatra śarva bhavaḥ caiva hy ugro bhīmaś ca viryavān |
- bhasmāntakāv dumdhūbih ca śrīvatsā ca mahābalaḥ || 85 ||
9 Niśvāsamukha 4.121cd: gahanaṃ ca tatordhvaṃ tu, vigraheśaṃ tatordhvataḥ.
incarnated in the eight Pramāṇa texts of the Pāṣupata: Paũcārtha etc. 10 Though none of these texts has come to light so far, we have a glimpse of the Paũcārthaprāmāṇa, as this text is quoted by Kṣemarāja ad Svacchanda 1.41–43. This fragment establishes that also the prime Pramāṇa of the Lākula division of the Pāṣupata (see below)—in contrast with the system known from the Pāṣupatasūtra and its commentary—acknowledges the ascending hierarchy of Rudra worlds; these are classified into three categories, namely aghora, ghora, and ghoraghorratara. Here we meet the very same Rudras again: ‘Those Rudras who have been mentioned, beginning with Gopati and ending with Gahana, they, however, are designated ‘terrible’ (ghora); they live in various worlds.’ 11

With regard to the fourth of these Pramāṇa texts, the Hṛdaya, Kṣemarāja makes an interesting remark. From this text six other Pramāṇa texts have been extracted that deal with ritual acts (kriyā) and in this respect differ from the other eight Pramāṇas, which deal with knowledge (jñāna). 12 These ritual Pramāṇas are said to have been revealed by a pupil of Lakulēsa, Mulsendra. 13

This brings Kṣemarāja to the difference between two divisions within the Pāṣupata movement (referred to as ‘Tantra’), namely between the Pāṣupata proper, founded by Lakuleśa, and hence designated ‘Lākula’, and the Mausula, founded by the eponymous pupil of Lakuleśa, Musula or Mulsendra. These Mausulas, though Pāṣupatas in the wider sense—after all they too stem from Lakuleśa—are put on a lower scale by the Svacchanda and its commentator. Whereas the observance of the Mausulas leads them finally to the Māyā Reality (SvT 11.71cd), the Pāṣupatas who base themselves on the eight Pramāṇas and belong to the Lākula division reach theĪśvara Reality in the Pure Universe (SvT 10.1169cd–70ab, 11.71ab).

The Pāṣupata movement

The differences between the various traditions that form the Pāṣupata movement become more clear from the treatment (in Svacchanda Paṭala 11) of the ascending hierarchy of highest stations (para(ma)m padam) that can be reached

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11 Paũcārthaprāmāṇa: prkalā gopatipūrṇa ye rudrās tu gahanāntagāḥ | te tu ghorāḥ samakhyātā nanabhuvanavisionāh || (SvT I, 16).

12 One wonders whether these ritual acts are subsumed under the six forms of worship specified in the Pāṣupatāsūtra (PS) 1.8: laughter, song, dance, bellowing, making obeisance, and muttering (PS 1.8: hasītaṅgitanṛttadūndumūnkanamaṅkāravajapyopa-haṇopatiṣṭheti ).

13 The names of these texts are given as (SvT II, 275): Purakalpa, Kanaka, Śālā, Niruttara, Višva, Prapaṇca. They are no longer extant.
by the followers of the various sects. The Mausula is here grouped together with the Kāruka, of which Kṣemarāja only notes that it has been founded by someone else, descended in the place Kārohaṇa. The followers of both sects, whose observances (vrata) deal with a multitude of rituals, reach the worlds of the Rudras Kṣeṣeṣā and Brahmavāmin, whom the Svācchanda (10.1125) had situated on yonder side of the barrier (granthi), though still in the Māyā Reality.

Within the Lākula division the Svācchanda seems to distinguish between the Vaimalas and those who follow the eight Pramānas, more specifically the Pañcārtha, according to Kṣemarāja; both reach the Īśvara Reality, but the former’s highest station is the world of the Rudra Tejeśa, while of the latter it is that of Dhruveśa. The Mathurā Pilaster Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 61 (i.e. ad 380/81, or ad 388, according to Falk 2004, 173) reports that a tradition of preceptors (guru) whose names end in vimala and who may have hence belonged to the Vaimala division, were affiliated to a lineage of teachers (acārya) that traced its origin back to Kuśika, supposedly the first disciple of Lakulīśa. The sacred memory of these gurus was kept alive in a ‘preceptor’s shrine’ (gurvāyatana), where cult objects were installed bearing their names (Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara), objects which were to be worshipped by the Māheśvaras. The Vaimalas may therefore have adhered to the Pāșupata school that followed the Pañcārtha doctrine as laid down in the Pāșupatasūtra (see below, p. 295). Finally, the Svācchanda specifies a group within the Lākula division that practises the observance of the skull (kapālavrata). This group

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14 A similar hierarchy, though unfortunately without the allocation of the Pāșupata sects by name, is given by Rāmakaṇṭha in his sub-commentary (upanyāsa) of the (lost) partial commentary on the Raurava by Sadyojyotis, the Sarvāgamaprāmāṇya, reconstructed by Goodall 1998, xxii–xxv.

15 SvT 11.71cd quoted by Jayaratha ad Tantrāloka 1.34 (I, 70): mausule kāruke caiva māyātattvam prakṛhitam || 11.71cd ||

16 Who this founder is does not become clear. He might be ‘Karuka’ whose name evidently connects him, in the view of Kṣemarāja, with the place of his descent, Kārohaṇa. Bhandarkar 1913, 121 identifies this sect with the Kālumukha (Kālānana) and conjectures that ‘the word Kāruka is probably a corruption of Kauruṣya, the name of the third of the four (according to the Purāṇas) pupils of Lakulīśa, or this last name may be the Sanskritised form of the original Kāruka’. Cf. Pathak 1960, 10. Lorenzen 1991, 84 rejects this identification. Cf. below, n. 3 on p. 527.

17 Kṣemarāja ad SvT 11.71cd:

śrīlakuleśāsiṣṭeṇa musulendrenā kārohaṇasthānāvatiśrīnā cāpareṇā māyātattvagata-
kṣeṣeṣābrahmavāminprāptihetukriyābhubhulāḥ sve sve śāstre vrataviśeṣā uktā iti māyā-
tattvam eva tatra paramaṃ padam |

Cf. above, n. 15 on p. 287.

18 SvT 11.72. Kṣemarāja (II, 328):

ye ’pi vaimalākhyāḥ pāṣupatabhedaḥ, tathā pañcārthapramāṇāś†aktopāparāḥ pare,
teṣām iśvaratattvavagatetesādhruveśav paramaṃ padam ity āha:
tejēsa vaimalānāṁ ca pramāṇe ca dhruvaṇaṃ padam || 72 ||

Cf. SvT 10.1174ab, where Tejeśa and Dhruveśa are both said to be the highest station for the followers of the Pramāṇas (see below, n. 20 on p. 288).

19 Sircar, SI I, 277–279; Bakker 1997, 68; below, p. 494.
seems to coincide with or to encompass the Vaimala, though Kṣemarāja’s commentary does not make this very clear. So far as to the Lākula division.

The question now arises: who is this disciple of Lakuleśa, Musulendra or Musula, who initiated a sect designated ‘Mausula’? Evidently we are here concerned with a group within the Pāṣupata movement that was chiefly engaged in ritual (worship) activity, forsaking the more rigorous portion of the Pāṣupata praxis. As such it might be a group that stood between the lay Māheśvaras (laukikas) and the tough ascetics with their transgressive practices. Unfortunately, none of the Pramāṇa texts ascribed by Kṣemarāja to this school has survived and little more information about the sect is known from the later Śaiva Siddhānta, which, in view of its ritualistic orientation, in a way may be conceived of as its successor (see below, p. 296). However, the alleged dependence of the Mausula text corpus on the Lākula Pramāṇas seems to allow the inference that this sect also acknowledged the hierarchy of Rudra worlds and as such deviated from the Pañcarthha school.

20 Kṣemarāja ad Ś vacchanda 11.73–74ab:

vaīmalapramāṇaśāstranisthō hi:
dīksājñānaviśuddhātmā dehāntaṃ yāva caryayā |
kapālavratam āsthiya svanā svanā gacchati tat padam || 11.73 ||
dīksājñānaśuddhātmeti padena proktakriyāpradhānāvatamatraniṣṭhamausulakārur- |
kebhyo 'tra višeṣo darśitaḥ | svanā svanā proktatejēṣadhruveśarūpam | yaḥ uktāṃ purastād:

tējēṣa ca dhruveśa ca pramāṇāṇāṃ paraḥ padam [ŚvT 10.1174]

īti || 73 ||

ye tu kapālādyasthirāṭhāṛāṇaḥ pūrvoktalākulāmnāyāt — ‘bhasmanī śayita’ [PS 1.3]

ītyādīpāṣupataśāstracodavātāh:

japahhasmakriyāniṣṭhās te vrajanty aiśvaram padam || 11.74ab ||

For, he who follows the Pramāṇa Śāstra and the Vaimala,

His soul is purified by initiation and knowledge, by (keeping to) the prescribed praxis until death, while abiding by the Kapāla observance—he goes to that station that is his own. [ŚvT 11.73]

The quarter-verse ‘His soul is purified by initiation and knowledge’ indicates the difference here from the afore-mentioned Mausulas and Kārukas, who are devoted only to observances that are chiefly ritualistic. ‘His own (station)’, that is to say the afore-mentioned Tejeśa or Dhruveśa; this has been stated above:

Tejeśa and Dhruveśa are the highest station (for those who follow) the Pramāṇas. [ŚvT 10.1174]

But those, (issuing) from the afore-mentioned Lākula stream, who practise the observances of bones like the skull (kapāla), on account of injunctions in the Pāṣupata Śāstra such as ‘One should lie in ashes’ [PS 1.3],

They, devoted to japa, ashes, and ritual, proceed to the station of Īśvara.

[Hans Teye Bakker - 9789004412071]
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THE EPGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE FROM MALHAR

The antiquity of a tradition that traced its origin back to a certain Mugalisa who was initiated by Lakulisha is secured by an inscription of which the text has recently become available. I refer to the Malhar Plates of Mahasivagupta, Year 57 (c. AD 650), actually found in Junvani (near Malhar) and hence also known as The Junvani Copperplate Inscription of Mahasivagupta, Year 57,21 which was published by G.L. Raykwar and Rahul Kumar Singh in Puratan (Vol. 9 (1994), 146 f.).22

I take ‘Mugalisa’ to be a variant or prakritism of Mudgaliśa or Musaliśa, both names meaning ‘Club-bearing Lord’. Musaliśa again may be a variant of Musaleśa/Musuleśa and, having the same meaning, it might not seem too far-fetched to identify the ‘Musulendra’ of Kṣemarāja with the ‘Mugalisa’ of the inscription.23

I present here my edition of 2000, which gave a Sanskrit text that was slightly emended according to its intended reading. Since then, however, I have reconsidered this edition and proposed some alterations in Bakker 2014, 143 f. These are presented in the notes.

Before discussing this inscription any further, I give the text of that portion of it that is relevant for the present study. This portion starts with the last word on the first plate (second side), line 8, and ends in line 23 on the second plate, second side.

21 For the early chronology of Dakṣina Kosala, the Pāṇḍuvaṃśa dynasty of Śrīpura and the reign of Mahāśīvagupta (c. AD 590–650) see Bakker 1994b; above, pp. 235 ff.
22 My edition of this inscription in Bakker 2000 was based, in addition to Raykwar and Singh’s edition of 1994, on a draft of a new edition by Ajay Mitra Shastri (Nagpur), which was published in 2001 (cf. Shastri 1995 II, 380 f.). Since then the original edition of Raykwar & Singh has been republished in Raykwar & Singh 2005, 188–192. The inscription was again edited by Susmita Majumdar in 2007. This set of three plates of copper is presently in the collection of Shri Raghunandan Prasad Pandeya (Raykwar & Singh 2005, 188; Majumdar 2007, 285). Shastri, unlike Raykwar and Singh, worked from photographs. Majumdar saw the plates herself and made use of photographs provided by Rahul Kumar Singh (Majumdar 2007, 293 n. 1). The text starts on the verso side of the first plate and comprises altogether 40 lines.
23 I consider musula/mausula to be a variant of musala/mausala. Cf. Rāmakanṭha’s introduction to Mataṅga 1.1.1 (p. 2) reading: lākulamausalādībhyaḥ. That we are concerned with an ancient historic tradition seems to be confirmed by graffitti found in the caves at Padaṇa Hill (Bombay), reading: sadhamusala (siddhamusala), and twice musaladatta. See Indraji 1881–82; Bakker 1991, 23; Bisschop 2006, 47. The site has been destroyed by building developments.
Malhar (Junvāni) Copperplates of Mahāśīvagupta, Year 57: ll. 8–23

sa-KURAPADRAKAH,
vājasaneyaca [10] raṇād abhyarthya BHĀṇḍĀGĀRATULAPADRAKAM*
Oṉī-bhogīvaṁ parivatena dāttvā,
sarvapiṇḍā [12] vivarjitas sadaśaparādhāḥ prātiśuddhacāṭabhaṭapraivesāḥ,
asyaṁ [13] mā (gha?) **-paurṇamāsyaṁ,
atraivātmakāritaśri-BĀLEŚVARARHĀRAKA-tapo [14] vanapratipālaṁartham
āropitebhyaḥ—
śīvasya mūrtinām aṣṭau vigrāheśvarāṇāṁ,
ga [15] haneśasya mūrtayo rudrāḥ šaṭsaṣṭyā anuṃghākay yuge yuge
parivartamā [16] nā,
adhumā kalikālām āśādyā,
śrīmaḷ-LAKULĪŚANĀTHO 'vatīrya,
SOMAŚA [17] RMĀ-khyabṛāhmanakule bhūtvā,
maḥāvrata (te)na*** dikṣito jagadindus,
tenāpi [18] MUGALISAS****,
tataḥ somādpārampravyakrameṇa,
sthāne guru***** śrī-RUDRASOMA-pra [19] śīṣyasṛi-TEJASOMA-śiṣyebhyaḥ
śrīmad-BHĪMASOMA-pādebhyaḥ,
śiṣyapraśiṣyāṇāṁ [20] yagadikśaśāvyākhyaṇānavasatipravartanaṁ
bhagnavidṛṇaṇadevakula [21] saṁskṛtaye ca |
mātāpitrō ātmanaṁ ca puṃyābhivṛddhaye,
samakālopa [22] bhogārtham ācandratārākārmam,
udakapūrvakaṁ tāṃrasāsanena pratipādi [23] tā ity [...]

* Majumdar reads (typo?): bhāṇḍagāra. Shastri takes this as the name of two villages: ‘Bhāṇḍāgāra may have been Bód or in the same tahsīl (i.e. Mahāśamund tahsīl of the Raipur District), and T(ū)lapadraka may have been a suburb of this locality.’ Their names seem to indicate villages where cotton (tūla) was cultivated and stored.
** Singh, Shastri and Majumdar read māpu.
*** Singh, Shastri and Majumdar read: maḥāvratena. The emendation maḥāvrata tena (haplology) in Bakker 2000 was proposed by H. Isaacson. In Bakker 2014, 144 this emendation has been again rejected.
**** Majumdar reads mugalisās; Singh and Shastri: ‘mugalisā (?)’. Mugalisa may be a variant/prakritism of Mudgaliṣa or Musaliṣa.
***** In Bakker 2014, 144 I have followed Majumdar’s emendation: sthānaguru.

Translation

Let it be known to you that—after we have earlier asked permission of the Vājasaneya branch (of the White Yajurveda) and have given the village

Bhāṇḍāgāra-Tulapadraka in the district of Onī in return—this village (scil. Pāśipadraka) together with Kurapadraka, along with the rights to hidden treasures and deposits, the right to collect all taxes, immunity from all impositions, the right to impose fines for the ten offences, and the exemption from being entered by officials and constables, starting immediately, has been bestowed by us here and now, on the day of full moon of Māgha (?) with the offering of a libation and by (this) copperplate charter, upon the feet of the illustrious Bhīmasoma, for the increase of merit of father, mother and ourselves and to be enjoyed as long as moon, stars and sun will last: 

There are eight embodiments of Śiva, the Vigrāhēśvaras; the embodiments of Gahāneśa are the sixty-six Rudras who bestow grace (initiation) and who roam about in successive yugas. Now the Kali Age has come and Lakuliśanātha has descended. He was born in the family of a brahmin named Somaśarman; after having been initiated by him (i.e. Somaśarman) in the Great Vow he became a moon on earth.25 And he again (i.e. Lakuliśanātha) initiated Mugalisa.

Then, in due succession of the lineage that started with Soma (‘the Moon’), the afore-mentioned Bhīmasoma—the pupil of the illustrious Tejasoma and grand-pupil of the illustrious guru Rudrasoma26—has been (justly) raised to the position responsible for the protection of the tapovana attached to the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka (Temple), which has been erected by ourselves. The donation is made to meet the expenses of ceremonies, initiations, teaching and housing of pupils and grand-pupils and to restore the shrines that have fallen into decay and are in need of repair.

**Interpretation**

The inscription is of paramount importance for more than one reason. One of them is that, in addition to the lineage of preceptors, it gives doctrinal arguments to legitimize the claims of the recipient Bhīmasoma. These doctrinal arguments should be compared with what we know of Pāśupata theology. In order to follow the paramparā of teachers back to Śiva himself, the text refers first to the latter’s eight forms that are designated ‘Vigrāhēśvaras’. As we have seen above, Vigrāhēśvara is, according to one tradition,27 the name of the deity who stands at the apex of our cosmos, in the granthi, where it borders on the Pure Universe. There he is surrounded by eight Rudras, four of whom bear names that mark the Aṣṭamūrti according to Kauśitaki Brāhmaṇa 6.2–3. Just

25 Having reconsidered the issue, I have accepted the reading of the epigraph in my 2014 publication, against the emendation accepted in Bakker 2000 (reproduced here). This has led to a new interpretation in Bakker 2014, 144:

Consecrated by the Great Vow (Mahāvrata), He (i.e. Lakuliśanātha) became a ‘Moon on Earth’ (Jagadindu). By Him again Mugalisa [was initiated].

26 If we follow Majumdar’s emendation we should translate: ‘the illustrious Sthānaguru Rudrasoma’.

27 This seems to be the tradition of the Śaiva Siddhānta as represented by the Niśvāsāmukha and the Mataṅga (see above p. 285).
like Rudra, the (grand)son of Prajāpati, through his eight forms, is the actual manifestation of God in the created cosmos, sometimes represented as the divine child, 28 so, it seems, is Śiva in his eightfold form of Vīgrahaśvāra (‘the Lord of Form’) considered the fountain-head of our universe in the theology underlying the inscription at issue. Then the inscription mentions Gahaneśa (‘the Lord of the Abyss’), the Rudra who rules the lowest world of the Māya Reality in the sub-barrier layer, directly above the ‘abyss’ or ‘net of bonds’, the material world. He is said to roam about in sixty-six embodiments in successive yugas and Lakuliśa is just the last of these incarnations in the present Kaliyuga.

In a letter already mentioned (see above, n. 7 on p. 285) Professor Alexis Sanderson brought an unpublished text to my notice, the Jayadrathāyāvala (JRY), which belongs to the (later) Bhairava scriptures of Agamic Saivism. Sanderson kindly placed at my disposal a portion of the edition he made of this text (4.449–460), based on a MS in the National Archives in Kathmandu. 29 He drew my attention to the fact that this text describes the sixty-six embodiments as ‘the Bhavas who reside in the sixty-six Māna (i.e. Pramāṇa) [worlds]’. 30 These embodiments or manifestations are divided into two lines of gurus (guruparikṭitis), a set of twenty-eight Śivas and one of thirty-eight Rudras, which are associated with different levels of Śaiva teaching. The first set, which begins with Śveta and of which the last two gurus are Someśa and Lakuliśa, is said to bestow both exegesis of the scriptures and, occasionally, initiation, following the division of the Pramāṇajñāna. 31 The second line of thirty-eight Rudras, which begins with Vareśvara and ends with Vasaṭkāra, is said to be authorized to granting initiation and is described as propounding the teachings of Bhairava. 32 It may be that the Pāśupata ascetic Udbhavāraśī, who is known

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28 See Bakker 1996, 9ff., above, p. 197. Cf. the Śrīpūrvaśāstra (5.28-29), referred to by Kṣemarāja (see above, n. 8 on p. 285), which assigns eight deities (śivaśāstra) to this reality, forming a mandala of the size of a thumb and headed by Mahādeva, the first of the Aṣṭamūrti.
29 Bṛhatśicāptram Vol. 5, MS No. 4650.
30 JRY 4.449 (edition A. Sanderson):
   adhunā gūḍhanirguḍhān pariktyugmagatān śṛṇu
   śvetādiṣṭākārāntān bhavān saṣṣaṣṭimānuγāṇān || 449 ||
31 JRY 4.453–454ab (edition A. Sanderson):
   someśa lakuliśaś ca hy asṭāviṃśaty arni śīvāh
   vyākhyaṅnugrahakarāḥ pramāṇajñānaḥvedataḥ || 4.453 ||
   prāṣāṅgikī tu asau teśaṁ sadyo 'nugrahakārīta
   bhairavāptapravaktaṁ svādhyaśēhānagatānuśaṁ || 4.459 ||
32 JRY 4.454cd–455ab, 459 (edition A. Sanderson):
   devitiya guruparikśīr vā vareśādyāṣṭātrīṃśikā || 4.454 ||
   sadyonugrahakartyte āsaṅga devy adhikārīta […]
   vauṣāṅkāra vauṣāṅkāra kathitaṁ tu guṛūḷamāh
   bhairavāptapravaktārop svādhaṣṭhānagatānuśaṁ || 4.459 ||
from an inscription from the Gandharvesa Temple in Sirpur (Srīpura) (c. AD 600), claimed to belong to this lineage, since he is explicitly called a Rudra (see below, p. 532).

There can be little doubt that the inscription at issue in mentioning the sixty-six Rudra manifestations descending from Gahaneśa, ‘who roam about in successive yugas to bestow grace (initiation)’, refers to the doctrine mentioned in the Jayadrathayāmala. This is again reinforced by the fact that the last two of the twenty-eight Śiva manifestations, Someśa and Lakulīśa also figure prominently in the inscription. To Someśa or Somaśarman, as he is called in the inscription, we will return below.

Lakulīśanātha, unlike Somaśarman, is explicitly said in the inscription to be an avatāra and through him the lineage of the donee Bhīmasoma is directly connected with the divine (Rudra) param. parā: Gahaneśa, Vigraheśvara, Śiva. Bhīmasoma’s lineage, namely, is said to stem from Lakulīśa through the latter’s pupil Mugalīsa, who was initiated by the ‘Moon on Earth’, Lakulīśa, and whom we have identified with Musula or Musulendra, the founder of the Mausula sect. If this identification is right, the conclusion would be natural that the lineage of Bhīmasoma belonged to the sect of the Mausulas, who, as we have seen, probably acknowledged the theology of an hierarchy of Rudra worlds, which plays such an important role in the inscription.

Somaśarman and the Somasiddhānta

Here, however, we encounter a difficulty. Though Bhīmasoma and his predecessors no doubt belonged to the Pāṣupata fold, the designation ‘Mausula’ does not occur in the inscription. With the Mausulas these ācāryas may have in common, it would seem, that they were engaged with ceremonies (kriyā) and worship rather than with ascetic practices, though they were in charge of the tapovana attached to the Bāléśvara-bhaṭṭāraka Temple in Srīpura. But how do we explain that their names end in soma? On account of these names I have argued (Bakker 2000a, 1159) that these ācāryas probably belonged to the Pāṣupata sect known as Somasiddhānta, a sect that hardly, if at all, features in Agamic literature where it is concerned with the Atimārga, but which in later sources is often equated with the Kāpālikas.34 Pāṣupata ascetics whose names

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33 From this evidence we may infer that a distinct Bhairava tradition within Saivism was acknowledged by the middle of the 7th century; it would seem, however, that Bhīmasoma did not himself belong to this tradition, since he affiliates himself to the first lineage of ‘Śivas’.

34 In the play Prabodhacandrodaya by Kṛṣṇamiśra (c. AD 1050–1100), the doctrine of the Somasiddhānta is identified with that of the Kāpālikas (Handiqui 1965, 640–645). Further see Lorenzen 1991, 82ff., 215ff.; Pathak 1960, 25. Alexis Sanderson pointed out to me that the Kapālin Satyasoma and his companion Devasomā feature in the Mattavīḷiṣaprahasana of the Pallava king Mahendravikramavarman (cf. Lorenzen 1991, 53).
end in soma are known from several inscriptions in which they are said to be engaged in the Mahāvrata, the observance in which, according to the Malhar inscription, Lakulīśa was initiated. Consequently, another question arises: who was Somaśarman?

The name Somaśarman was already known from the Vāyu and Liṅgapurāṇas and he is evidently the same as the Someśa named in the Jayadrathayāmala as Lakulīśa’s predecessor (see above, p. 293). These Purāṇas describe him as the 27th incarnation of Śiva, born in Prabhāsātīrtha, a holy place in Saurashtra near the Arabian Sea, famous for its Somānātha Temple, an assignment that makes the impression of being secondary. The legend told in the Malhar Plates, however, is apparently somewhat different. It says that Lakulīśanātha was born in the brahmin family of Somaśarman, who therefore may have been a senior contemporary of his. Moreover, Lakulīśa is said to have been initiated by this Somaśarman in the Mahāvrata and so became the ‘Moon on Earth’.

Somaśarman and his family (kula) thus appear, in the religious imagination of the believer, to have been the House (śarman) from which the Moon (soma) rose over the world (jagadindu). The play of words may allude to ‘Soma’ as a name of Śiva and the transfiguration undergone by Lakulīśa in the initiation ritual, which, when he underwent the anointment with ashes, made him shine like the moon.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE SKANDAPURĀṆA

The tradition recorded in the inscription seems also to have been known to the author(s) of the original Skandapurāṇa (SP). This text, too, places

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35 Alexis Sanderson kindly provided me with the following information. The Indargarh Pāśupata stone inscription of AD 710–11 was engraved by a Mahāvratin with the name Cāmuṇḍasoma (Journal of the Bihar Research Society 1955, 249–261). A Mahāvratin Somibhaṭṭāraka/Sobadeva of the Kolanupākā inscription of AD 1050 is described as proficient in expounding the Somasiddhānta (Select Epigraphs of Andhra Padesh No.4). Two inscriptions of the time of the Cola king Rājadhirāja II (Nos. 403 of 1896 and 206 of 1912 of the Madras Epigraphical Collection), mention a Somasiddhāntin, though ‘soma’ is not affixed to his name: Vāgīśabaṭṭa (EI XXVII (1947–48), 297 f.). The predecessors of this and other priests associated with the Tiruvorriyur Temple, ‘five hundred Brāhmaṇa Mahāvratin’ś, were, according to the account of the Sthalapurāṇa, ‘brought from the banks of the Ganges’ (EI XXVII, 300 n. 1). See also Bakker 2014, 149 f. for Soma priests belonging to the Muṇḍa–Śrīkalhika Pāśupatas serving at the Paśupatinātha Temple in Nepal.

36 VāP 23.214–217; LiP 1.24.120–124. Another feature that makes the impression of being secondary is that Aksaṭa (Γautama?), Kumiāra (or Kaṃāda), Ulika and Vatsa are mentioned as his pupils. Dviveda 1982 remarks about him: ‘Prabhāsātīrtham āsādyā somaśārmā prādhurhitab | nāsti pāthāntaram atra |.’

37 By accepting the reading mahāvratena in l. 17 instead of the conjecture mahāvrate tena, our interpretation (Bakker 2014) has significantly changed. I now think that the inscription tells us most likely that Lakulīśanātha became a ‘Moon on Earth’ thanks to his commitment to the Mahāvrata.
Somaśarman in the Kali Age and he and his family are said to have been the first ones blessed with Lakulīśa’s grace; the text apparently implies that the latter was born in Somaśarman’s, i.e., Atri’s House. The spot where the incarnation took place is called Kārohanā.\(^{38}\) The relevant passage reads:

> And God, the Lord of the gods, who is possessed of supreme sovereignty, after having assumed a white-bodied form (i.e. a body like that of the moon), went to the auspicious House of Atri, (that is to say, he went to the house of a man) named Somaśarman, who was born in the lineage of Atri. That lord, i.e. Śaṃkara, blessed/initiated that brahman-knowing brahmin belonging to Atri’s lineage together with his (whole) family by bestowing upon him perfection in yoga. Thereupon, after he had initiated this excellent brahmin and his family, O Vyāsa, God went to Ujjayāna (Ujjain) and entered the cremation ground. There the bull-banneled God took a bath in ashes, took a torch in his left hand and sat down (in meditation).\(^{39}\)

In Ujjain the God-man accepted Kauśika as his first disciple,\(^{40}\) and then this ‘white-bodied’ or moon-like incarnation went to Jambūmārga, Mathurā and Kanyakubja, where he initiated Gārgya, Mitra and a fourth person who is only said to have been born in a good gotra in the Country of the Kurus, whose name may have become Kauruṣ(y)a (SP$_S$ 167.122–123). Then the Lord, here named Lāgūḍī, taught them his own doctrine (svasiddhānta), known as ‘Paṅcārtha’, which, as the Skandapurāṇa suggests, was different from the doctrine of his senior, the blessed Somaśarman.\(^{41}\) I take this as an indication that the author(s) of the Skandapurāṇa belonged to circles that were closer to the Lākula than to the Mausula division.

\(^{38}\) Cf. Kauṇḍinya ad Pāṣupatasūtra 1.1 (p. 3); Hara 1967, 157 n. 1.

\(^{39}\) SP$_S$ 167.124–127 (edition Peter Bisschop 2006):

\begin{verbatim}
| bhagavan api deveśah paramaisvaryaśaṃyutah | 
| atrivanāśprasūtasyā nāmnā vai somaśarmanāḥ | 
| rūpaṁ kṛtvā sitāṅgaram tu jagānätīrthamāḥ subham || 124 ||
| sa taṁ brahmavitāṁ viṣyam ātreyāṁ sakulam vibhuh | 
| yogasiddhiprāṇena anuvajraḥ saṃkaraḥ || 125 ||
| anuvṛthyāṁ tadā vyāsā sakulam dvijasattanam || 
| jagamajjayaninu devaḥ śmaśānaṁ ca viveśa ha || 126 ||
| sa talāṁ bhasmanātmānam avagunthya vyādhaṇjaḥ | 
| ulmukaṁ vāmahastena grhitva samupaviṣṭ || 127 ||
\end{verbatim}

\(^{40}\) Cf. Kauṇḍinya ad Pāṣupatasūtra 1.1 (p. 3 f.).

\(^{41}\) SP$_S$ 167.128–130:

\begin{verbatim}
| tatra prathamam ādāya śiśyaṃ kauśikam tīvraḥ | 
| jambūmārge devīṣṭaṁ ca mahuruyāṁ tato ‘param || 128 ||
| kanyakubje tataś cānyam anuvṛthyā jagatpatiḥ | 
| svasiddhāntam ādavā yogyam uvacēdat ca lāgūḍih || 129 ||
| rahasyam paramaṁ hidaṁ paṅcārtha iti saṃjñitam | 
| viṣyān vocāyaṁ datto yuṣmabhyaṁ mṛtyubandhanāt | 
| anaya dīkṣayaḥ viṣyān prāpyadhvaṁ paramaḥ padam || 130 ||
\end{verbatim}
When we return to the Junvānī inscription and combine its evidence with that of the Skandapurāṇa, we may say that there evidently was a tradition within the Paśupata fold that recognized a, what we may call ‘Paśupata milieu’ before the appearance of Lakulīśa. Somaśarman belonged to this milieu. In the Pāncārthika-Paśupata context he was mostly either ignored, or relegated to a previous yuga by being promoted to an avatāra of Śiva himself. Both our sources, however, the inscription and the Skandapurāṇa, emphasize that, though they recognize Somaśarman as a patriarch, Somaśarman is not an incarnation, and he or his tradition derived legitimacy only from the belief that Lakulīśa was born in or resorted to his House. According to the Skandapurāṇa, Somaśarman himself was favoured with initiation by Lakulīśa, according to the inscription it was the other way round, but, the inscription adds, the lineage of Bhimasoma, received its ‘certificate of divinity’ through Mugalisa, who was initiated by the incarnated Śiva himself.

The combined evidence of both sources thus seems to suggest that there existed an early Śaiva tradition that, on the one hand, recognized the uniqueness of Lakulīśa’s incarnation, but that, on the other hand, distanced itself from the Pāncārthika and Lākula divisions. In its initial stage this tradition, or one strand of it, may have been named after its putative preceptor: ‘Mausula’. In the course of time other groups may have been assimilated, and gradually a distinct theology and praxis may have been developed, which became known as the Somasiddhānta, thus preserving a reference to a distant saint who was hallowed as its founder, Somaśarman. Part of this tradition, again, may eventually have merged with groups that produced the Bhairava texts such as the Jayadrathayāmala, that is to say, became indistinguishable from the Kāpalikas.

Others may have joined the Śaiva Siddhānta, of which a mathikā was attached to the very same temple complex of Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka in Śrīpura.  

42 This clause is no longer valid according my 2014 interpretation; above, p. 290.
43 Sanderson 1988, 668.
44 A hoard of nine copperplate grants of Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna was found in Sirpur (Shastri 1995 II, 376–379; see also Shastri 1992a and Shastri 2001). These nine charters have been edited and published by Rahul Kumar Singh in Raykwar & Singh 2005, 196–217. It appears that in this Sirpur hoard there are altogether seven charters that record grants made to Śaiva acāryas said to issue from Nandapura, but who were living in this mathikā in Śrīpura. The lineage of these acāryas should therefore been seen as a subbranch of the Nandapur one; it can be reconstructed from these grants: 1) saivacārya Aghoraśiva, 2) bhagavatpāda Dirghaśiva, 3) bhagavatpāda Vyāpaśiva, and 4) sthānaguru Astraśiva. All the donations were made to meet the expenses on repairs, daily worship and musical performances. From these inscriptions and the names of the Śaiva acāryas ending in śiva it becomes clear that the Śaiva Siddhānta was firmly established in Daksīna Kosala, at least from the second half of the 6th century onwards. The original headquarters may have been in Nandapura, a place not properly identified, but probably an administrative division within the Pāṇḍava Kingdom. The charters of the Sirpur hoard and their significance for our understanding of the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka Temple complex in Sirpur have been evaluated in Bosma 2018, 75–87.
The Skandapurāṇa goes a step further in its mystification of the origins by affiliating Somaśarman to the lineage of Atri, the father of the Moon, that is to the Lunar Race, the Somavamśa. There are indications that this powerful symbolism was not lost on the rulers of Dakṣiṇa Kosala. It can hardly be coincidence that the Junvāni inscription is a charter issued by a king who proclaims to belong to the Somavamśa. After the theological and legendary superstructure, the actual paramāṇpara of Bhimasoma is said to begin with Soma, thus creating, possibly intentionally, a profound ambiguity: Soma who? Soma that is Śiva, Soma that is the son of Atri, the Moon, Soma that is Somaśarman, Soma that is Jagadindu (i.e. Lakulīśanātha), or just a preceptor named Soma who lived long after the times of Lakulīśa and Mugalisa, but who happened to start a tradition of ascetic teachers within the Pāṇḍavata fold?

The intimate relationship of the royal Soma dynasty with this particular branch of Pāṇḍavatas may thus have been endorsed by an ideology according to which both claimed descent from Soma—the dynastic one from Soma, the son of Atri, the sectarian one from the ‘Moon on Earth’ that appeared in the family of Somaśarman, that is in the House of the Moon. This House may therefore have been conceived by the mythmakers of the time as the joint cradle of two lineages: a worldly one culminating in Mahāśivagupta, the Somavamśin king of Kosala, and a religious one headed by Bhīmasoma, an ācārya living in the temple complex founded and patronized by his royal counterpart.

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45 That this tradition was not completely obliterated in later centuries, but locally survived well into the second millennium is shown by the Kāravāṇamāhātmya. This late text sings the greatness of the Kārohana tīrtha, which is unanimously identified with the village Karvan c. 30 km north of Baroda (D.R. Bhandarkar 1906–07; Lorenzen 1991, 177). We encounter the following pedigree of Śiva’s incarnation in the fourth adhyāya of this far from homogeneous text, spoken by Mahādeva (edition in Dalal 1920, 51):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kāyāvarohanē puṇye tīrthe tīrthavaroottame} & \\
\text{bhṛgukṣetrapavitirtham avatīrno yuge yuge} & \\
\text{ādikalpavasāne tu brahmakalpe purātane} & \\
\text{brahmaṇo manasaḥ putro atrināma ca viśruteḥ} & \\
\text{aṭris tu janayāmāsa ātreyo nāma nāmatāḥ} & \\
\text{ātreyād agniśarma ṭi agniśarmasutaḥ śucih} & \\
\text{somaśarmeti vikhyāto dharmasūlo jitalendriyah} & \\
\text{somaśarmasuto jāto viśvarūpo dvijottamah} & \\
\text{viśvarūpād aham jāto balarūpadharo harah} & \\
\text{yena vyāptaṁ jagat sarvam trailokyaṁ sacarācaram}
\end{align*}
\]

46 Malhar (Junvāni) Copperplates of Mahāśivagupta, Year 57, ll. 4–5: somavamśa-samghavah paramāṁśu-varunādhyātāṁ śrīmahāśivagupta-vijayadevaḥ. The likelihood of such a connection was first suggested to me by Rahul Kumar Singh.